The perceived benefits of integrated teaching of 2nd year pharmacy students

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Background: The General Pharmaceutical Council highlights the importance of integration between Science and Pharmacy practice in undergraduate teaching to enhance learning and provide students with the foundation for a career in contemporary pharmacy and refers to Harden's ladder of integration to develop a stepwise progression to integration. To evaluate the views of second-year pharmacy students on the delivery of integrated microbiology lectures designed and delivered by microbiologists and pharmacists.

Method: A 10-item questionnaire was developed and informed by existing unit evaluation questionnaires and literature on integrated teaching. It was administered to all second-year pharmacy students in the final lecture of a series of four integrated lectures, and traditional non-integrated lectures using audience response software. Integrated lecture topics covered travel vaccines, malaria, human papillomavirus, sexually transmitted diseases and norovirus. The microbiologist discussed microbial disease and the pharmacist lectured on treatment guidelines and medicines optimisation. Eight questions on the perceived benefit of integrated lectures and impact on learning required a response using a 5-item Likert scale. Two open questions allowed students to describe the aspects of the integrated lectures that they liked and to offer suggestions for improvement.

Results: 52% (n=123) of students either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the statement 'My understanding of the relevance between Microbiology and Pharmacy practice in non-integrated lectures could be improved', with 76% (n= 113) 'strongly agreeing' or 'agreeing' that their understanding of the relationship between Microbiology and Pharmacy practice is better in an integrated lecture. 73% (n=114) of the cohort felt that their learning had been enhanced through integrated lectures.

Conclusion: The findings of this first cycle of innovation indicate that students feel that integrated lectures designed and delivered by microbiologists and practising pharmacists enhance their learning and help to link the science of microbiology with pharmacy practice.